

*Justification by works, and not by faith only,  
stated, explained, and reconciled with  
Justification by faith, without works.*

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Being the substance of

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# S E R M O N

On J A M E S ii. 24.

Preached at

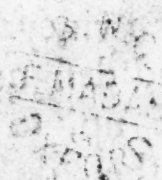
St. Vedast's Church, Foster-Lane,

FEBRUARY 8, 1761.

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By the Rev. Mr. M A D A N.

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L O N D O N :

Printed in the Year, MDCCCLXI.

*You see then, How that by Works a man is justified, and not by Faith only.*

THE author of this epistle was  
 T James the son of Alpheus,  
 one of the twelve apostles,  
 a pillar of the church, and  
 a minister unto the circumcision, Gal.  
 ii. 9. therefore we find it directed to the  
*twelve tribes scattered abroad*, ver. 1. i. e.  
 such of the twelve tribes as had embrac-  
 ed christianity, who, by the providence  
 of God were scattered abroad from  
 Jerusalem, and had formed chris-  
 tian societies in different parts of the  
 world.

By reading this epistle, we find how  
 early Satan began to sow his *tares* a-  
 mongst the *wheat* of God, and to bring  
 the accursed weeds of *Antinomianism* in-  
 to the vineyard of the holy JESUS: one  
 grand design of this epistle was to root  
 these up, to reprove the believing Jews  
 for their degeneracy, both in faith and  
 manners, and to prevent the spreading  
 of those libertine doctrines which threat-  
 ened the destruction of all practical god-  
 liness. This is more especially the scope  
 of this chapter from ver. 14 to the end.

This blessed scripture, given by inspiration of God, and profitable for our instruction, as it is plain to the *diligent* and *attentive*, so it is dark and hard to be understood by the *careless* and *inattentive* reader : hence some, whose carnal hearts could not bear the reproofs they have met with herein, have endeavoured to dispute its authority ; others have been unable to reconcile the words of our text with that plain conclusion of St. Paul, Rom. iii. 28. *Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law* ; others again have brought the words of our apostle in direct opposition to that fundamental truth of the gospel, *justification by faith only* ; little thinking that by opposing scripture to scripture, so as to make them contradict each other, they are, so far as in them lies, destroying all scripture.

It must be allowed, that both sides of a contradiction cannot be true, and that it is a contradiction to say, *we are justified by works, and not by faith only*, and that *we are justified by faith without works*, is too evident to be deny'd, supposing every word in each proposition hath but *one* sense, therefore the *same* in the one as in the other : *except there be an ambiguity in the same term*, St. Paul, and St. James



do contradict each other, which cannot be, saith the learned and pious Richard Hooker in his discourse of Justification.

The way to reconcile these two apostles, is to look for the *ambiguity*, to find out where it lies ; and thus to shew, that instead of contradicting each other, they both are contending for the *faith once delivered to the saints* ; it will then appear, that St. James denies a man can be justified by a *dead faith*, which St. Paul never affirms, and St. Paul affirms, that a man is justified by a *living faith*, which St. James never denies ; and so instead of obscuring, they each contribute to throw light upon that interesting point, the *justification of a sinner in the sight of God*.

But that this may be fully understood, I shall endeavour to explain the matter more at large : and this will be best done by considering, the meaning of the term, *justified*, for there lies the *ambiguity*.

2dly, How it is used in scripture. I. To denote the *meritorious cause* thereof, which is Christ. II. The *instrumental cause*, which is *faith* — and then it will appear, that the justification Paul speaks of is to be referred to these, whereas that in the text is to be understood in a *decla-*



*rative* sense, as will be evident when we consider how frequently the word justified occurs in this sense in scripture, and the examples, instances, and arguments which we find in the context.

Lastly, we will observe that in every person that is justified, these *three* particulars concur, and that no person is justified, in Paul's sense, that is not also in the sense of our text, which will introduce some practical inferences from the whole.

And, first, the word *justify* is clearly a forensic term, taken from the proceedings in a court of justice: persons tried at a bar, are either pronounced *innocent* or *guilty*; the first are said to be *justified*, the second *condemned*. This appears evidently to be the meaning of the word *justified*, as it stands in direct opposition to the word *condemn*; it signifies to *acquit* of guilt, to *absolve*, to *pronounce one righteous, just and innocent*, Deut. xxv.

1. *If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked.* Prov. xvii. 15. *He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are an abomination unto the*

*Lord.* Now, whenever a person is accused and tried, he must be accused and tried upon some law he is supposed to have broken ; for *where there is no law, there can be no transgression.* What is the law a sinner hath broken, upon what law must he be arraigned and tried ? the law of GOD. Now, as we are all sinners, and have broken GOD's law, what must become of us if we plead the law in our defence—can we be justified thereon ? certainly not : or what must become of us, if we are without any thing to plead ? what remains for us, but the grievous penalty of everlasting death ! seeing it is the judge of all the earth, before whom we stand, and He hath just now told us in his word, he that *justifieth the wicked is an abomination unto Him.* It is clear then He cannot justify us upon account of any thing that is in us ; for even our best works are so full of, and mixed with corruption, that if we were to offer them in our defence, we should only make bad worse.—No, the word of GOD declares, that *all the world is under sin,* and therefore *every mouth must be stopped.*

But, further, the law of GOD hath a promise annexed to the keeping it, *the man that doth these things shall live by them.*

Now the life here promised to the finless observance of the law, ( I say finless observance ; for whosoever shall *keep the whole law*, and yet *offend in one point*, he is *guilty of all*, James ii. 10.) is life eternal; therefore if we had kept the law, we should have, by virtue of the promise, an absolute right to life : this right to life is also to be considered as belonging to a just person, as the forfeiture and loss of it is to be looked upon as part of the condemnation of the guilty : but judgment is come upon all men to condemnation ; therefore the sentence upon this condemnation implies a privation of happiness, as well as an infliction of the heaviest pains and penalties, both on body and soul. The former is indeed necessarily included in the latter.

Moreover, we must observe, that the source of all our guilt, and the foundation of all our misery, is the dreadful finfulness of every man by nature ; being fallen from God, and having a *carnal mind that is enmity against God*, which is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. Rom. viii. 7.

If these things are so, and that they are so the word of God declares, how can we be accounted righteous, and just before God, so as not only to escape the penalty



threatened, but deserve the rewards promised under the law ?

Whensoever a person is acquitted or justified, there must be some cause, some *meritorious cause*, i. e. arising out of the merits of his case, upon account of which he is justified, or pronounced righteous. We must therefore look out for some *meritorious cause* of our justification in the sight of God : where shall we go to find it—to our hearts ? Alas ! God declares that the heart is *deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked*, Jer. xvii. 9. That *the imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil continually*, Gen vi. 5. and again, Gen. viii. 21. *the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth*. Shall we go to our words ? *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*, therefore as the heart is corrupt, as the fountain head is impure, so are the streams that flow therefrom : hence it is that St. James saith c. 3. v. 6. *the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity, it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature, and it is set on fire of hell*. By our words we shall be justified, and by our words we shall be condemn'd, saith the Lord ; Matt. xii. 37. Yea, for every idle word (much more for every more grievously sinful word) shall men give an ac-

*count in the day of judgment* ; who then will dare to put the issue of their eternal life and death on the fruit of their lips ? shall we appeal to our actions for our innocence ? Alas ! when we consider the holy requirements of the law ; as touching the very best of our doings, we must say in the language of the poor leper, Lev. xiii. 45. *Unclean ! Unclean !*

Seeing then that as concerning our thoughts, words, and works, we are *sinners exceedingly before the Lord*, there can be no *meritorious* cause in ourselves of our justification ; and it is plain that St. James in the words of our text could never mean that we are justified i. e. judicially pronounced innocent and righteous, by, or upon account of, our works, or have the least idea of them as the *meritorious cause* of a sinner's justification before God.

Whither can a sinner fly ? God must either see cause to justify him, or must condemn him everlastingly. Here then comes in the obedience unto death of the Lord Jesus, the surety for guilty souls, who took the dreadful debt upon himself, *who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree*, 1 Pet. ii. 24. If. liii. *The Father laid on him*

*the iniquities of us all, he was wounded for our transgressions, was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed,* he paid the debt to law and justice to the uttermost, his active and passive obedience fulfilled the law, answer'd all its demands, and merited, not only the pardon of sin, and exemption from punishment, but all the blessings of time and eternity which were annexed to the fulfilling the law; the obedience of our Lord was not only *meritorious*, but *infinitely meritorious*, he suffer'd as man, he merited as God, for he was and is God and man in one Christ, therefore he *magnified the law and made it honourable*, beyond all the obedience of men and angels, supposing they had kept it without one failure.

The obedience of Christ unto death, is therefore the only *meritorious cause* of justification, and in this view, as relating to the *meritorious cause*, all that are justified, are justified by *Christ only*, without any of their own works precedent or subsequent. In this sense St. Paul used the word justified, Acts. xiii. 39, *BY HIM all that believe are justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.*



But Paul says in other places that we are *justified by faith*, now here is a plain ambiguity in the term *justified*, for Christ and *faith* are not one and the same thing; how then can we reconcile the apostle Paul with himself, when he saith in one place *We are justified by Christ*, in another we are *justified by faith*? this can only be done, by having recourse to the plain distinction which the scriptures afford us, in considering Christ as the *meritorious cause*, and faith as the *instrumental cause*, or that by which the *meritorious cause* is apply'd unto us, so that we are benefited thereby.

I will illustrate this by a familiar instance. It is usual to say such an house is very light, because it hath many windows: now this is speaking very improperly if we consider the windows as the efficient cause of light in the house, the sun is the efficient cause of the light, not the windows, they are the instrumental cause, or that thro' which the light passeth: so to say we are justified by faith, means no more than to say that faith is that *window*, which the spirit of God opens in the heart of a sinner, thro' which, the light of Christ the sun of righteousness passeth, in all its saving and beneficial influences; something like this, is the apostle's manner

of speaking. 2 Cor. iv. 6. For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. He had before described the rejecters of the gospel under the like image ver. 3, 4. But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. Faith is the medium through which the gospel shines into the heart, and enables the sinner to discern the glory of the Saviour: carnal reason, and the wisdom of this world too often keep the light of Christ out of the heart; these are ordinary means which the god of this world makes use of, to shut out the light of the gospel; hence it is, that we see so many learned men in other things, utter fools in the things of God, and instead of being humble believers, are proud infidels: but it is faith only by which we can be enlightened; therefore though the Lord Jesus hath merited our justification before God, yet we are not actually justified, till He is received into the heart by faith, and rested on, and trusted in; as the whole meritorious cause of our jus-

tification ; and this is the sense in which we are to understand the scriptures which tell us, *we are justified by faith.*

Having seen that there is an ambiguity in the term *Justified*, and pointed out where the ambiguity lies, namely, in its sometimes denoting our being accounted righteous before God, in respect of Christ as the *meritorious cause*, sometimes in respect of our faith as the *instrumental cause*, nothing remains for us to observe further on these two different views of the word *Justified*, than that in both, our works are utterly excluded, they have no share in either case, nor can we contend that they have, without overthrowing the whole plan of Redemption ; for we can alledge no reason for Christ's becoming a saviour to us, but his own infinite love and compassion towards a wretched, undone race of sinners ; neither can we assign any reason, why faith should justify instrumentally, but that which St. Paul gives, Rom. iv. 16. *It is of faith that it might be by grace*, and 1 Cor. i. 29. *that no flesh should glory in his presence* : the whole is of mere grace and favour, utterly exclusive of man's righteousness in every sense, shape and degree ; wherefore Christ is called the *gift of God*, John iii.



16. and iv. 10. Faith is also the *gift of God*, Phil. i. 29. and the justification of a sinner is the *free gift of God*, Rom. v. 18. *And if it be by grace then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace : But if it be of works then is it no more grace, otherwise work is no more work.* Rom. xi. 6.

In order therefore to find any analogy between these words and those of our text, wherein we are told, *a man is justified by works and not by faith only*, we must have recourse to a farther explanation of the word *justified*, and shew, that here it neither respects the *meritorious* cause, nor the *instrumental* cause of the justification of our persons in the sight of God, for with either of these, works cannot be joined, without contradicting the rest of God's word.

In the third place, therefore, let us observe that the word *Justified*, is here used in a *declarative* sense, a sense it is often used in by the sacred writers ; thus we must understand the word when it is applied to God, as Ps. li. 4. *That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and clear when thou judgest*, i. e. declared to be just and righteous in all thy judgments and ways. So Luke vii. 29. *And all the people and the publicans justified God.* How

so ? why *declaratively*, by approving our Lord's words and actions, and openly testifying their belief of the truth and faithfulness of God, in fulfilling the scripture, by sending the promised Messiah into the world, and as an evidence that they thus *justified* God, *they were baptized with the baptism of John.* *Justified* in this declarative sense, signifies to acknowledge a thing or person to be just and good, and to vindicate from the unjust imputations of the wicked, as Mat. xi. 19. *Wisdom is justified of her children.*

So Is. l. 8. our Lord saith, *He is near that justifieth me*, this scripture was fulfilled, Mat. iii. 17. when the voice from heaven said, *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased* ; and Mat. xvii. 5. *This is my well-beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, bear ye Him.* This is a declarative justification of our Lord, a vindication of his innocence against the calumnies of his enemies.

So Christ is said to be *justified in or by the spirit*, 1 Tim. iii. 16. an explanation of which, according to the sense I am contending for, lies ready to view, Rom. i. 4. where we are told, *He was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.*

So in our text, a man is *Justified by Works*, i. e. declaratively, he is declared by his works to be a true believer. And that this is the sense of the passage appears from the scope and design of the epistle, wherein it is clear St. James did not intend to describe the way of Justification, but to lead us to the knowledge of the genuine fruits and certain effects of it, against those who set up a devilish and *dead faith*, in the place of a divine and living principle. ——— This also appears from the examples, instances, and arguments, which we find in the context.

The first example brought by the apostle, to illustrate his position, that a man is *justified by works*, is that of Abraham. St. Paul produces him as a proof of a seemingly direct contrary position, that a man is *Justified by faith without works*, Rom. iv. 3, 4, 5, 6. *Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works.*



How then can we reconcile the apostles, one with the other ? by consulting the word of GOD, no other way ; and here we shall find that St. Paul is speaking of the justification of Abraham in the sight of GOD by his faith, therefore cites Gen. xv. 6. *And he believed the Lord, and He counted it to him for righteousness.* So that *then* he was actually a justified person before GOD. When was this, in what period of Abraham's life ? not when he offered up his son, but above twenty years before that son was born : St. James says he was justified by works *when he offered up his son* : how clear is it then that the word *justified* must be understood here in this *declarative* sense ? as if the apostle had said, Abraham was declared to be a true and sound believer by what he did. *We see how faith wrought with his works* ; for he did that which was demonstrably the effect of a strong faith, and *by works was faith made perfect*, i. e. declared to be true, saving, steadfast : and the *scripture was fulfilled* which saith, *Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness*, i. e. this justification of Abraham's person above twenty years before, was proved to be true and real, by those fruits which

the power of living faith in his heart produced, more especially when under the great trial of offering up his son : this is mentioned, not as if it was the *only* proof Abraham gave of his faith, but as the grand event of his life, which proved his faith to be strong and real, beyond all others, and that he was so united to God by faith, as to be truly called *the friend of God*.

The other example St. James mentions is Rahab the harlot, *she was justified by her works* ; when ? *when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way*, i. e. she was then declared to be a true believer by her actions : but she was a believer, consequently a justified person in the sight of God, before ever the spies came to her ; if not, how came she to receive them, and conceal them from the pursuers ? why did not she betray them ? she tells us why, Josh. ii. 9. *She said unto the men—I knew that the Lord hath given you the land ; and ver. 11. The Lord your God, He is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.* From whence we learn that she believed in the Lord God of Israel, and believed as firmly that the promise of the land of Canaan should be fulfilled to the seed of Abraham, as Abraham did himself : this

her actions fully declared, when at the hazard of her own life, she received the Israelitish spies, concealed them, and sent them forth in safety ; she then declared herself to be a true believer by the works of faith : so that St. James is here to be understood, as saying, that Rahab, as well as Abraham, was an example of this *declarative* Justification.

The instances the apostle mentions, all tend to strengthen and enforce this method of interpretation of the word *Justified* in this place, ver. 14. *What doth it profit, though a man say he hath faith, and hath not works ? can faith save him ?* i. e. such a faith as hath not works, as is not productive of the fruits of the spirit in the heart and life ? is this saving faith ? certainly not ; for such a faith wants the evidence of its being true and real, and nothing but true faith can save. ver. 15. *If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, depart in peace, be ye warmed, and filled, notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful for the body, what doth it profit ? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.* By which instance we are taught, that a dead faith, which rests only in speculation, can do the soul no more good, than a few fair



speeches would do a poor naked beggar, he would still be hungry and naked, notwithstanding these ; so the soul is still left miserable and poor and blind and naked before God, that has nothing but a dead, unprofitable, unfruitful profession of faith : v. 18. *Yea, a man may say, thou hast faith, and I have works ; shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works ; thou believest there is one God ; thou dost well ; the devils believe and tremble.* By this we may learn, that there is no proving our Justification to others, but by our works : a man may ask me for a proof of my faith, how can I give it him ? I may *tell* him I have faith, but I cannot *prove* to him that I have faith, but by the works of faith ; and if my faith doth not produce the proper fruits, it is no better than the devil's faith ; he could say, *I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God,* Mark i. 24. *Jesus I know,* Acts xix. 15. yet he is but a devil still ; and we have no scripture testimony of our being any other than the devil's children, unless we evidence and declare the truth of our faith by shewing forth the genuine fruits and works of faith. All this the apostle confirms ver. 20. *Wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead ?* and again,

ver. 26. *As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*

From all which it is evident, that the apostle by saying in our text, that a man is *not justified by faith only*, means, that a man cannot be proved, demonstrated, declared to be a Justified person, by any other way, than by a manifestation of the reality and life of his faith, in its fruits, effects, and proper works: so that instead of there being any disagreement between St. James, and St. Paul, the one faith just the same as the other. St. Paul saith, That the true faith, by which a sinner is Justified, i. e. absolved, pardoned, pronounced righteous before God, is that which *worketh by love*, Gal. v. 6. St. James in this chapter proves the same thing, only in different words; and there is no more contradiction, than when in the XIth article of our church, we read, "That we are accounted righteous before God, only for the merits of Christ, and not for our works and deservings." And in the XIIth article, "Good works are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification, whereby a true and lively faith is as evidently known, as a tree is discerned by its fruits." Now, would any one seek fruit without first planting the tree? and when the tree is planted, if it bear no

fruit, is it not a proof that the tree is dead? whereas if it bring forth good fruit 'tis a good tree. However, the fruit don't *make* the tree alive, but *proves* it to be alive: so works don't justify us (either as the *meritorious* or *instrumental* cause in the sight of God) but our works which spring from faith, do prove that we are justified; and in this sense *we are justified by works, and not by faith only*. By CHRIST only are we *meritoriously* justified, and by faith only are we *instrumentally* justified in the sight of God, but by works and not by faith only, are we *declaratively* justified before men and angels.

The length of time taken up in explaining this important scripture, must necessarily make me very short in the inferences to be drawn from the whole. But 1st. we may learn from hence, that we can have no certain evidence of the safety of our state, unless we know of a surety that we are justified in this threefold sense of the word, *meritoriously* by Christ, *instrumentally* by faith, and *declaratively* by works, which are the fruit of faith: the resting in a notion of faith without the life and practice of faith, can give us no scriptural ground of hope towards God. 2dly, we may abound in



what we ourselves, or others call good works, we may *give all our goods to feed the poor, and our bodies to be burned*, and yet perish everlastingly, unless these things proceed from Christ received into the soul by faith, working in us a conformity to his own image, and now become the spring and motive of all we do : till this is the case, we can do no work that is good in the sight of \* GOD : *self*, and not God is our end, and we are looking unto *self*, instead of || Christ, for a righteousness to *justify* us. ¶ Again, let what has been said, be a caution to you all, that you may not be led to read the scripture by halves ; but with humbleness of mind and fervent prayer, exercise yourselves daily therein ; until having drank deeply of this well-spring of life, you are enabled to see the glorious conformity of one part of revelation with another, and *are ready always to give a true scriptural answer to every man, that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.*

Beware both of men and books, however recommended to you, that in any wise oppose the doctrine of free pardon and deliverance from sin, both in its condemning and reigning power, by FAITH ONLY : the apostle Paul has pronounced

\* Vide Art. xiii. Rom xiv. 23. † If. xlv. 22.

a heavy curse upon them all ; yea, tho' they were angels from heaven, Gal. i. 8, 9. Therefore, as you love your souls, beware of them, lest you also *perish in their gain/saying*.

Beware also of those who would persuade you, you can be christians without holiness ; and that if you do but give an outward, bare assent, to some certain propositions concerning Christ, you have saving faith ; forbidding you to search after the fruits and evidences of faith in your hearts and lives, as tending to lead you into a legal spirit.

In answer to such, let me leave you with an apostolic admonition upon your minds ; and may the Spirit of God fix it ever on your hearts ! *Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith ; prove your own selves ; know ye not your own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be repro-bates ?* 2 Cor. xiii. 5. Hear also the disciple, whom Jesus loved, 1 John ii. 3, 4. *Hereby we know that we know Him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith I know Him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. And again, If ye know that he is righteous, ye know every one that doth righteousness is born of Him,* 1 John ii. 29.

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